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USSR: Refocusing on INF

High-ranking Soviet officials yesterday sought to shift world attention away from the Korean Air Lines disaster to the INF talks, amid signs of some confusion about the details of General Secretary Andropov's latest arms control offer. []

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First Deputy Foreign Minister Korniyenko, in prepared remarks at a press conference, ruled out the possibility that Moscow would accept even a partial deployment of US Pershing II and cruise missiles. He maintained that British and French missiles have to be included in the talks, explicitly rejecting the notion raised by West German Foreign Minister Genscher last week about a possible change in the USSR's position. []

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Marshal Akhromeyev, a First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, commented that Andropov's offer late last month to scrap some medium-range missiles, including SS-20s, included both launchers and missiles. Recent Soviet statements in Geneva suggested confusion regarding the details of this offer, with some delegates saying that it affected launchers only and others saying that missiles also would be destroyed. In addition, Akhromeyev reiterated official Soviet calls for equal numbers of Soviet and NATO aircraft. []

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Comment: Korniyenko's remarks apparently were designed to dispel any notions in the West that the USSR might make substantial concessions because of the adverse impact of the airliner incident. He also evidently wanted to make clear that Moscow's key principles for an agreement were unchanged, despite Genscher's remarks and other press speculation to the contrary. He did not rule out the possibility that the INF issue could be shifted to the START talks, but he parried a question about a change of venue by impugning US sincerity in that forum. []

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Akhromeyev's clarification of Andropov's latest arms proposal—the first public one to date—presumably is authoritative, even though Soviet delegates in Geneva are insisting on a contrary interpretation. His call for equal numbers of aircraft is at odds with recent private Soviet hints to West European leaders that Moscow might be flexible on this score. Neither Korniyenko nor Akhromeyev alluded to Moscow's threat in Geneva last week that it might reassess its participation in the talks in mid-October if the US position remained unchanged. []

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EASTERN EUROPE-USSR: Comments on the Shootdown

Budapest is now taking a more pro-Soviet position on the shootdown of the South Korean airliner, and Bucharest has broken its silence, both apparently as a result of heavy pressure from Moscow. []

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The Hungarians, after taking a restrained pro-Soviet stance on the incident for several days, attacked the US last weekend in an unsigned editorial in the Communist Party newspaper. The editorial accused Washington of risking the lives of the airliner's passengers "with immeasurable cynicism" in order to acquire military secrets. It also suggested that the US provoked the incident to gain support for deploying INF, approval for MX funding, and backing for its defense of "inhuman Central American military dictatorships." []

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The Romanians published last weekend on the back page of major newspapers an ambiguously worded article that slightly favored the Soviet line. The article referred to sources who question how the airliner could accidentally have wandered deep into Soviet airspace, and it accused Western critics of using the incident to blame the USSR for increasing world tensions. It urged that this incident not be used to make the discord worse. []

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A Bulgarian official on Tuesday confided to the US Ambassador that Sofia had come under "tremendous pressure" from Moscow in connection with the incident. []

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Comment: Hungary's initial and Romania's continuing foot-dragging reflects their ability—especially Romania's—to pursue their own foreign policy lines. It also probably stems from their desire to avoid disturbing relations with the US just before Vice President Bush's visit next week. Both regimes are likely to try to limit further commentary on the incident. []

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President Ceausescu, meanwhile, apparently has postponed his trip to the USSR, reportedly scheduled for early September. He and the Soviet Ambassador had a meeting on 6 September that the Romanian press described as "comradely." []

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The use of the term "comradely" probably means there were differences between Ceausescu and the Ambassador. The Romanian leader may have avoided traveling to Moscow at this time for fear that he would encounter irresistible pressure to adopt the USSR's pugnacious line. []

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LEBANON: Prospects for Renewed Fighting

Another round of fighting is likely between the Lebanese Army and various Muslim militias.

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Comment: A more aggressive strategy by the Lebanese Army is likely to prompt renewed Druze and Palestinian attacks against Christian villages, such as Dayr al Qamar, which is under siege by the Druze. Although an Army initiative probably would improve the morale of frontline units, an attack against a Druze village would further strain the Army's cohesion.

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Druze and Palestinian militias are likely to be rearming and planning new attacks on Army positions. The anniversary this weekend of the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps probably will provoke attacks by Palestinians and Palestinian-assisted Druze units.

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FRANCE-ITALY: Concern About Arms Control

A French diplomat in Rome recently told US Embassy officers that Paris is concerned that Prime Minister Craxi's government may be weakening on the Allied position against including British and French nuclear systems in INF. [redacted]

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Paris reportedly is particularly disturbed about the "softness" of the Italian response to the recent letter from Greek Prime Minister Papandreou on INF and about Foreign Minister Andreotti's reference to a "margin of flexibility" following discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in Madrid. The French plan to voice their concern during Craxi's current visit to Paris and in subsequent visits to Rome by President Mitterrand and Defense Minister Hernu. [redacted]

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French officials will stress that they would be willing to participate in arms reduction talks only if Soviet forces are substantially reduced, current restrictions on ballistic missile defense are reaffirmed, and progress is made on control of conventional forces and chemical weapons. In addition, they will make the point that their strategic forces represent the minimum required for a credible national deterrent and that they have no margin for reductions. [redacted]

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Comment: The French probably are worried about the impact of possible Soviet moves on the Allies, most of whom view the issue of British and French forces as the obstacle to an INF agreement. Although Italian officials previously have referred to the need to account for British and French systems in some arms control forum, Rome so far has supported the Allied position against including the systems in INF talks. Paris earlier had taken the position that France would not take part in any multilateral arms control negotiation until both superpowers made substantial reductions in their nuclear arsenals. [redacted]

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CHILE: Government Mobilizing Support

The government and its conservative supporters are taking measures to persuade leaders of the opposition Democratic Alliance to resume the talks they suspended last Friday. []

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Government officials are meeting with neighborhood groups in Santiago's slums to tighten security and prevent a recurrence of the violence of last week. They also are initiating a nationwide petition drive to demonstrate support for Interior Minister Jarpa's efforts to open the political process to include opposition groups. Jarpa has said he is willing to meet with groups other than the Alliance.

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Comment: These efforts are designed to capitalize on the generally favorable response to Jarpa's initiatives. The steps also are aimed at softening criticism of Chile in coming UN and OAS sessions by demonstrating that the government has popular support and is prepared to continue its dialogue with responsible political groups. []

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The government hopes the Alliance will be forced to resume negotiations for what is likely to be a prolonged political transition. It has succeeded in improving its standing at home, but it has not yet solved the basic problems—the economic recession and the desire for an early return to civilian rule—prompting the protest. []

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EL SALVADOR: Government Military Operations

The Army has begun a large sweep operation in the southeast, and it is continuing small-scale activities elsewhere to impede guerrilla efforts to mass for new attacks. []

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Military operations are under way in southern Usulután Department to retake the town of Jucuaran, which was seized last week by the guerrillas after its small garrison was forced to flee. The Army plans to sweep south from the Littoral Highway to the coast and encircle some 500 insurgents believed to occupy the zone. The Air Force and Navy also will participate in the operation, according to the US defense attache. []

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Army units have continued to engage insurgents in San Miguel, La Unión, and Morazan Departments and are guarding against possible attacks in and around the capital and other cities. Some military sources believe the recent 300-man raid on the city of San Miguel and demolition of four key bridges in that department were preludes to a guerrilla offensive. []

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Comment: The Jucuaran area probably is the insurgents' most important logistic base, and an effective Army sweep could disrupt their external resupply lines and yield captured materiel, personnel, and documents. The guerrillas, however, are unlikely to be drawn into heavy fighting with their backs to the sea. As a result, they probably will try to evade Army units. []

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The assault on San Miguel, although a major attack, may not have been the first stage of more intensive activity. Nonetheless, military leaders appear correct in assuming that the guerrillas will mass rapidly for new attacks if the Army does not sustain its pressure. []

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INTERNATIONAL: Impending Censure of Shootdown

Members of the International Civil Aviation Organization Council, who convene today in Montreal, probably will adopt a resolution censuring the USSR for its downing of the South Korean airliner. Canada, the US, Japan, and most West European countries will support a draft condemning the attack as a violation of international law, demanding full Soviet cooperation in an ICAO investigation and urging measures to prevent repetitions. [redacted]

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Comment: Countries reluctant to impose sanctions on the USSR are likely to feel more comfortable in denouncing Moscow in the "nonpolitical" ICAO than in NATO, the EC, or CSCE. France especially has argued that such international organizations as the UN Security Council and the ICAO are the most appropriate forums for dealing with this issue. Moreover, the Soviets have no veto power in the ICAO Council. Although a resolution is likely to pass in the Council, the Soviets and their clients will have an opportunity to reduce its impact during discussion of the issue by the ICAO Assembly next Tuesday. [redacted]

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SAUDI ARABIA-LEBANON: Limits of Saudi Mediation

The Saudis probably will halt their mediation efforts regarding Lebanon if a military confrontation develops there between the US and Syria. Prince Bandar, King Fahd's personal envoy, has indicated to US officials that Riyadh is pessimistic that US intervention can save the government of President Gemayel. He says the Saudis will withdraw public support for Gemayel if the US substantially increases its military involvement. [redacted]

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Comment: Fahd probably believes that increased US military activity would discredit Riyadh's efforts to act as an honest broker and encourage the belief that Saudi Arabia is siding with the US and Israel against an Arab state. The King is likely to believe that heavier US involvement would rally sympathy for Syrian President Assad in the Arab world, create a backlash against Riyadh by Arab radicals, and provoke criticism in the royal family and among other key constituencies of Fahd's close link to US policy. Although Fahd would like to salvage an agreement, a US-Syrian confrontation probably would cause him to disassociate himself from the Gemayel regime and the US. It also might cause him to side publicly with Assad and condemn US actions. [redacted]

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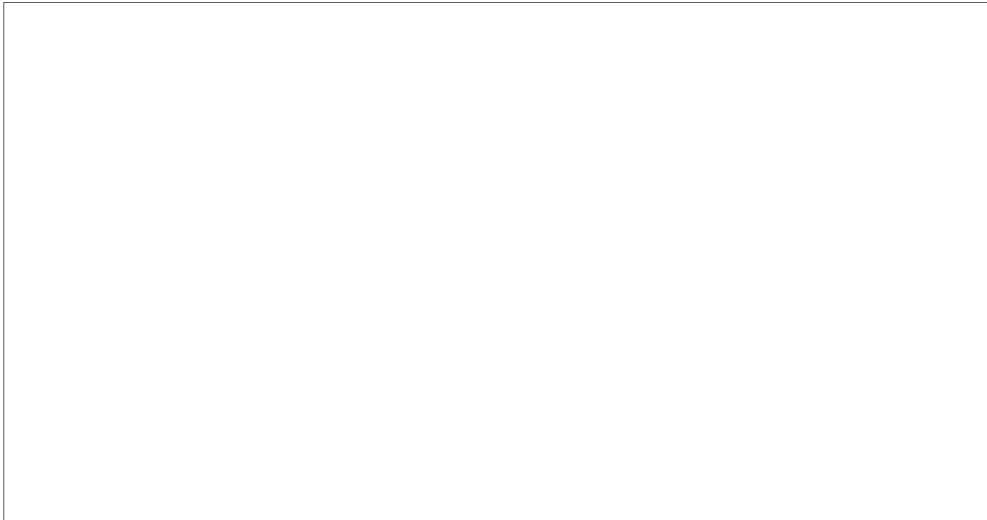
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WEST GERMANY: Labor Unions and INF

The West German Trade Union Federation has called for a five-minute work stoppage on 5 October to underscore its desire for a successful conclusion to the INF negotiations in Geneva. The "minutes of reflection" will coincide with the Federation's two-day Conference on Peace and Disarmament in Cologne on 4 and 5 October.

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Comment: Union leaders are struggling to unite the members behind a policy that supports both mutual arms reductions and West Germany's broader security interests. They probably hope this move will undercut demands by some leftwing unionists for a 15-minute work stoppage during the protest-filled week of 15 to 22 October. The federation's leadership also is likely to hope that the shorter period and its balanced list of speakers in Cologne will allow it to shift the focus away from INF and leftist demands for unilateral disarmament. The work stoppage is a concession to radical members, however, and it could set a precedent for later in the fall.

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UPPER VOLTA: Officials Arrested

Several moderate former government officials reportedly were arrested last weekend for plotting a coup against the six-week-old leftist regime of President Sankara. US Embassy sources claim pro-Libyan radicals in the regime, meanwhile, are unhappy about Sankara's meeting last week with an envoy of Chadian President Habre. A high-level French delegation has arrived in Ouagadougou to reassure Sankara that Paris plans to continue its support. []

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Comment: The regime is beset by internal dissension, and the arrests indicate that Sankara has yet to consolidate power. The government may execute the officials. Paris probably has reaffirmed its intention to continue supplying vital economic assistance in order to give Sankara and less radical members of his regime an alternative to complete dependence on Tripoli. Nevertheless, the country appears headed for protracted turmoil as radicals try to increase their influence and push for even closer ties with Libya. []

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AUSTRALIA: Maritime Aid for Island Nations

Australia plans to provide several South Pacific island nations with patrol boats for protection of maritime economic zones. In addition, Air Force officials are meeting with regional leaders to work out details of air surveillance of their economic zones. Delivery of the first six patrol boats will begin in 1985, with at least three going to Papua New Guinea. The Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji also have expressed interest in receiving the Australian boats to help protect their fishing grounds. []

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Comment: All of the island nations view the surrounding seas as important to their prosperity and have declared 200-mile exclusive economic zones. They cannot exploit the fishing grounds themselves but increasingly are depending on the fees levied on foreign vessels fishing in their waters. The two aid projects underscore Foreign Minister Hayden's belief that Australian aid should provide military assistance, as well as economic help, to the island nations. []

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